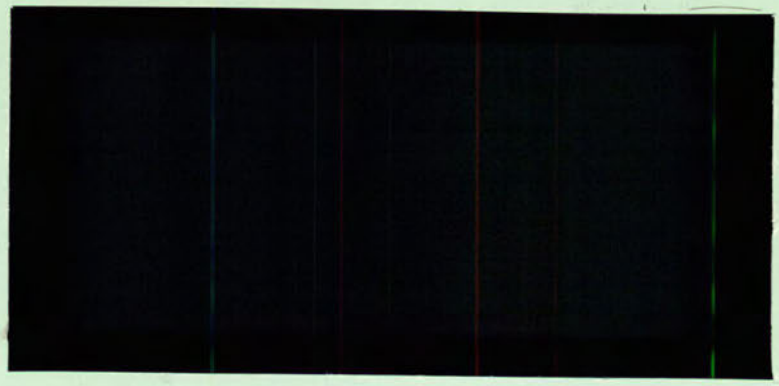

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CHALLENGE TESTS

Alberta Education approves the concept of challenge examinations in accredited Alberta high schools. The concept of challenge tests may be defined as the process whereby a student may be granted credits on the basis of satisfactory performance on an examination covering the prescribed course content in a subject which the student has elected to challenge, with or without prior formal classroom instruction.

Participation of Schools in the Challenge Test Program

The challenge test program is not mandatory. A school jurisdiction, which has elected to participate in the program, need not offer the program in all high schools in the system. Nor is it necessary for a school, which has elected to participate in the program, to provide challenge tests in all high school subjects in which instruction is offered. The school may offer challenge tests in any number of selected subjects. Such decisions are left to the discretion of local school authorities.

A school wishing to participate in the program shall notify the Director of Student Records and Computer Branch Services, Alberta Education accordingly. The notification must

CHALLENGE TESTS

A Policy Proposal for Challenge Test Programs in Alberta High Schools

Planning and Research Branch
Alberta Education

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be accompanied by a resolution or motion of the school board indicating approval.

Category 1 private schools wishing to participate in the challenge test program are required to apply to Alberta Education for accreditation and approval.

Purpose of the Challenge Test Program

A program of challenge examinations (tests) is designed to serve the following purposes:

1. To provide students with greater flexibility in making decisions and choices about their education, as well as to offer incentives which will encourage the development of more positive attitudes toward school and mastery of course content.

2. To provide regular high school students with opportunities and privileges similar to those presently enjoyed by adult students.

3. To allow students the option of challenging a course for credits, when they feel that they have already attained a certain level of proficiency and knowledge in a subject area, obtained either through intensive study and application or through some other means, without being required to take regular classroom instruction.

4. To permit students to earn credits in advance of the grade in which they are registered, by electing to challenge and pass a challenge examination in a particular subject. Students achieving a pass mark in the course which was success-

fully challenged, shall be awarded credits in that course and in the normal prerequisite courses.

5. To allow schools the option of using challenge tests to evaluate performance and achievement levels of out-of-province students in order to ensure appropriate placement in the high school program.

6. To provide the means for students of exceptional abilities and/or talents to accelerate their programs in order that they may graduate earlier and enter post-secondary institutions or qualify for gainful employment.

7. To enable students, who have successfully passed a challenge examination, to register in other courses of special interest which normally may not be available to them in their regular programs.

8. To provide opportunities for adult students to challenge any high school course in order to earn credits and thus upgrade their qualifications for job employment or pre-employment training.

Form of Challenge Tests

Challenge tests should test a student's proficiency and knowledge, which is necessary to equate past learning with the course content of a subject. As such, they should be equivalent to or similar to what would generally be a final examination in a course. Challenge tests should measure a student's mastery of theoretical course content, cognitive skills and practical skills, in-so-far as is possible. They

may consist of any one or more of the following three components:

1. Written tests - to measure cognitive skills and knowledge of course content.

2. Oral tests - to assess speaking and comprehension skills, e.g., Second Languages.

3. Practical tests - to evaluate technical and practical skills, e.g., typewriting and Industrial Arts.

Type of Challenge Tests

Two types of challenge examinations will be available to students:

1. Existing provincial grade 12 appeal examinations.

2. Locally developed or school based examinations.

General Policies Pertaining to Challenge Tests

1. To be eligible to write challenge tests, applicants, other than adult students, must be registered in a school or school jurisdiction, which has elected to participate in the challenge test program.

2. All students shall be eligible to apply to write challenge tests.

3. An individual may apply to write a challenge test in one or more courses.

4. All challenge tests will normally be written three times per year; in September, January and June. In special cases, the school may administer challenge tests at other

times, if it is deemed to be desirable (e.g., a student transferring in from out-of-province).

5. An individual who fails a challenge test in a course may not challenge the same course until the next scheduled examination period. For example, a student who fails a challenge test in a course in September, may not attempt to challenge that same course again until the examination period in January.

6. The pass mark in a challenge examination shall be 40 per cent or better. In order to be awarded credits retroactively in prerequisite courses, the pass mark shall be 50 per cent or better.

7. The principal shall recommend that credits be granted in any course in which the student has earned a pass mark on the challenge test.

Provincial Grade 12 Appeal Examinations as Challenge Tests

1. Regulations pertaining to provincial grade 12 appeal examinations, as presently outlined in the Junior-Senior High School Handbook, apply.

2. Provincial grade 12 appeal examinations are also available to high school students as challenge tests. These include the following:

English 30
Social Studies 30
Mathematics 30
Biology 30
Chemistry 30
Physics 30
French 30

Challenge tests in all other grade 12 (30 level) courses, (e.g., English 33, Mathematics 33, Ukrainian 30) may be available as locally developed tests at the school or school system level.

3. Grade 12 students may elect to write the provincial grade 12 appeal (challenge) examinations in lieu of the local school or school system final examinations. These examinations will be available for writing in the first week of February, the first week of July and in the third week of August.

4. Grade 10 and 11 students are also eligible to challenge the provincial grade 12 appeal examinations.

5. The fee for each subject shall be $10.00.

School Based Challenge Tests

1. Schools may provide challenge tests in all courses or in selected subjects in grades 10, 11 and 12 in which instruction is offered but a school may not provide challenge tests in those subjects designated as provincial grade 12 appeal examinations.

2. Written challenge tests should be approximately of two hours' duration and should cover as much of the prescribed course content as possible. School jurisdictions are required to retain copies of all challenge tests on file for a period of at least one year and such tests shall be made available for scrutiny to Alberta Education officials and other interested parties upon request.

3. All challenge tests shall be administered and supervised in accordance with accepted practices.

4. An individual student who receives a pass mark of 40 per cent or better on a challenge test shall be recommended for credits by the principal in the course challenged. An individual who achieves a standing of 50 per cent or better shall be awarded credits in that course and in the prerequisite courses.

5. A student registered in school may challenge high school courses at any grade level provided that such courses are included in the school's challenge test program.

6. The Alberta Correspondence School will make challenge tests available in those high school subjects which are normally offered as correspondence courses. Applicants in a school jurisdiction, who are unable to write a challenge test in a course because it is not offered in the school jurisdiction, may apply to the Alberta Correspondence School. Individuals may not write challenge tests set by the Correspondence School, if such tests are offered in a school in the school jurisdiction. The last condition, however, does not apply to adult students.

7. A jurisdiction may make challenge tests available to adults.